



# EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: REALITY CHECK ON GROUND ZERO

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to critically analyse the status of India with respect to the strides taken as a nation to integrate education for sustainable development in the curricula whether in schools or in higher education institutions. Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 i.e Quality Education cannot be complete unless we understand the urgent need for sustainability education at all levels. India has exhorted in NEP 2020 to move towards sustainable education keeping in mind the important goalposts of ensuring equity, equality and inclusion of all especially the marginalised groups. In this paper a close examination of some important researches and a few recent project initiatives that have been taken to achieve the same have been presented looking at their sufficiency in terms of the targeted outcomes by 2030.

**KEYWORDS:** Sustainability, Competencies, Critical Thinking, Quality.

## INTRODUCTION:

There is no doubt that education for sustainable development needs to be accorded top most priority in order to achieve the outcomes of SDG 4 too. There is a long pending demand from a number of stakeholders that environmental education should be taught as a compulsory subject at all levels of school education so that the attitudes, values, skill sets and knowledge towards the conservation of environment develop early. However the demand has not seen the light of the day. Education of the environment, by the environment and for the environment is something which appears to be just rhetorical. Education for sustainable development came to the centre stage of discourse when many environmentalists and educationists around the world seriously started raising their voices against environmental degradation which is contributing to climate change across the globe. Whether it is deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, sound pollution, soil pollution, hunting down of endangered species, mining etc, each has contributed manifold leading to the planet heading towards more man made disasters as well as natural disasters. The problem is that as a country we are more focussed in India on disaster management then on disaster prevention.

Given the above background it is imperative to look at the genesis and meaning of education for sustainable development.

Education for sustainable development stands for the development of the requisite attitudes, values, skills and knowledge sets through education that equip you to contribute towards environmental conservation. There is no doubt that this education has to begin from the primary stage itself. At present the component of ESD is integrated in small parts in a piecemeal manner across different subject domains not making it very effective in terms of outcomes that it ought to be achieve. Another important aspect related to sustainability education is that it is not about conservation of environment alone. It is also about bridging the social category gaps in income and education, providing quality education, poverty alleviation, provision of safe drinking water for all, population control, gender justice, safe guarding of human rights, peaceful co-existence, citizenship education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, conservation of natural resources, engagement in environment friendly practices, understanding climate change, education that empowers against substance abuse, cultivation of democratic and secular outlook, cultivation of respect for diversity in all its manifestations etc. Looking at the above themes of study with respect to sustainable development it is amply clear that the present education system is merely doing a lip service with respect to engaging students in a meaningful discourse on the same whether at the primary, middle, secondary or tertiary stage of education. It is high time that ESD is taught not only as a compulsory subject at all stages of education as a part of the scholastic domain but also through the co-scholastic efforts.

## REVIEW OF IMPORTANT RESEARCHES IN THE FIELD OF ESD IN INDIA:

TESF, India Background Paper (2021) This paper is based on the issue of transforming education for sustainable futures. The paper highlights the contemporary challenges in the field of education in the Indian context with respect to the quality of education, the lack of understanding with respect to climate change, pre-service teacher education not laying any emphasis on sustainability education as well as no focus on education for sustainable cities and communities. Further the paper highlights the need for looking at social exclusion and inequity specially which has been accentuated in the covid-19 pandemic across past several months. It is important to address the need of looking at the four intersections across vulnerabilities that are social, economic, environmental and physical in

nature thus contributing to injustices that increase manifold. It is also pertinent to look at the area of education for sustainable development by focusing on important problem areas such as the effective linkages between ESD and environmental change, wider public engagement to identify the role of communities in the development of sustainable cities, practice-based solutions to curriculum framing and pedagogical interventions. There is a need to reform educational practices in India such that there is a dramatic rise in filling the gap between theory and practice with respect to implementation of sustainable cities program in India such that it is an effort that is environment friendly in the long run. It is also important to understand that it is achievement of sustainable development goal in areas of education, health, food security, infrastructure, energy etc shall only be possible if India as a nation focuses on institutional capacity building at all levels

Leder and Bharucha (2015) This paper examines the application of Basil Bernstein's Sociological theory of pedagogy with respect to looking at the Indian classroom teaching of the concept of water in geography classrooms in the English medium schools of Pune. There is a shift from the traditional authoritarian mode of teaching learning to a participative and student focused teaching-learning methodology as advocated by the United Nations decade of education for sustainable development from 2005 to 2014. The data in the present study was collected using classroom observations, policy analysis as well as textbook review to look at the practice of visible pedagogical practice and invisible pedagogical practice with respect to education for sustainable development. It was found that the Indian classroom with respect to the implementation of ESD faces a number of challenges such as the student perceptions, competencies of teachers, too much emphasis on textbook teaching, inadequate teacher training, large class size, obsolete teaching methods and a curriculum that is not relevant. In order to make ESD as a transformative teaching-learning strategy it is important to emphasize greater student participation and bring a drastic change with respect to teaching methods and content with respect to schooling in India. It is also important that ESD focuses on equipping students with the skills, competencies, values and attitudes which reflect in their day to day life.

Hoffman and Bharucha (2013) This concept paper focuses on looking at education for sustainable development as note in education it advocates that it is important that teachers as well as teacher trainers have a multidimensional perspective with respect to the present the past and the future. It is important to look at the globalised world from the vantage point of sustainable development. It is important that schools focus on developing of empathy, weighing the consequences of your actions on future, thinking scientifically with an open mind, critical and reflective thinking on environmental issues, decision-making at individual and collective level which includes responsibility sharing, motivation of all stakeholders towards sustainability education, differentiating between actions that are sustainable and actions that are not sustainable and understanding the essence of acting in a sustainable manner. It is advocated that there is an urgent need to shift the focus from Environmental education to ESD first such that it is understood that ESD is about social, economic and environmental sustainability as a whole. For ESD to emerge as modern education it is important to understand the intersectionality between local, national and global interests.

Mohanty (2018) The paper presents an overview of the current status of sustainable education in India. It highlights the status of Indian education with reference to achieving the goal of sustainable development. It presents a conceptual model of providing sustainable education in schools primarily looking at the three drivers which include education policy framework, pre-service and in-service

teacher education including leadership training and development it at all levels and thirdly development of infrastructure in schools for creating an environment to provide education for sustainable development by mobilizing community resources as well as creating awareness at different levels through participation in different curricular and co-curricular activities. It is important to understand that sustainable education goals include the development of all socio-economic category groups, effective management at all levels and community development. It is also important to understand that there needs to be a balance between people, the planet as well as the economic considerations such as profit only then can a possible solution towards community development be achieved. The authors advocate that in order to achieve the SDG 4 it is important to understand that ESD has to be adopted as a process and a strategy in our education system to make it more vibrant and progressive. This will involve a thorough understanding of the complexities, diversities and dilemmas that surround our world. It is also stressed upon that in order to succeed ESD strategies need to be adopted to find solutions to emerging realities. It is important to understand that citizenship training to promote the development of responsible citizenry should be included as a part of sustainability education such that students learn not only to conserve natural resources but also to promote equity and equality in all endeavours.

#### **SOME SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS TOWARDS ESD IN INDIA:**

**World Heritage Biodiversity Conservation Project at Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan:** As a part of the ESD initiative world heritage biodiversity scholarships were provided to 50 school going children of the staff and local communities from this park. The student was selected on a competitive basis and a scholarship of rupees 500 per month was provided to them. the recipients of the scholarship regularly participate in environmental conservation programs and solid waste management initiatives in the KNP. the scholarship in turn has changed their family's life in terms of their understanding ,worldview and efforts towards conservation of biodiversity in this National Park .

**Paryavaran Mitra Programme to Save the Kukkarahalli Lake in Mysore, Karnataka:** the Paryavaran mitra programme is an initiative of the Centre for Environmental Education in collaboration with Ministry of Environment and Forests .A team of young volunteers was taken on board to check the rising pollution due to Sewage in this lake .The students constructed bamboo biodecks at the lake which served as filters for the sewage water and kept the biological oxygen demand of the lake in check. Students also generated a lot of awareness in the local communities with reference to conservation of the lake and they used various platforms such as Facebook pages, online petitions ,seminars and workshops and conducting surveys in order to gain support of different stakeholders for the preservation of the flora and fauna as well as water quality of the lake .

**Sagar Islands, Sunderbans: WWF ESD Initiative-**The world wide fund for nature has involved Four schools in order to orient them towards the whole School approach under education for sustainable development .A photography and video workshop was organised for the students in order to involve them in the art of filmmaking and on the other hand provoke their critical thinking towards the conservation of environment. This project particularly held relevance as the Sunderbans were being connected through bridges and ports to the mainland Kolkata and therefore with it came a lot of development initiatives. In order to check that this industrialisation and development did not pollute the Sunderbans this sensitisation workshop was organised.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

It can be concluded that as a nation we need to really take urgent steps towards inclusion of Education for Sustainable Development across the curriculum from the primary stage to the Higher Education stage only then can we aim at the achievement of the SDGs, as all the goals to be achieved are linked to sustainability in one way or the other. At present institutions are just paying a lip service to this important domain either by discussing it under EVS or as an SUPW component which is problematic and untenable with respect to achievement in terms of tangible outcomes.

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- II. Tomar, A (2014). Good practice stories from education for sustainable development in India: UNESCO.

#### **ONLINE RESOURCES:**

- I. <https://iihs.co.in/knowledge-gateway/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/TESF-India-Background-paper.pdf>
- II. <https://esd-expert.net/files/ESD-Expert/pdf/Concept-Paper-Hoffmann-Bharucha.pdf>
- III. [https://www.academia.edu/11249073/Changing\\_the\\_Educational\\_Landscape\\_in\\_India\\_by\\_Transnational\\_Policies\\_New\\_Perspectives\\_Promoted\\_through\\_Education\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Development\\_ESD\\_ASIEN\\_134\\_I\\_167\\_192](https://www.academia.edu/11249073/Changing_the_Educational_Landscape_in_India_by_Transnational_Policies_New_Perspectives_Promoted_through_Education_for_Sustainable_Development_ESD_ASIEN_134_I_167_192)